DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 764 HE 031 359

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TITLE	A Memo to Graduate Students Preparing To Be the Faculty of the Future. Preparing Future Faculty. Occasional Paper No. 5.
INSTITUTION	Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC.; Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, PA.
PUB DATE	1997-10-00
NOTE	7p.; For other documents in the "Preparing Future Faculty" program, see HE 031 354-360.
AVAILABLE FROM	Preparing Future Faculty, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009; phone: 202-884-7423; fax: 202-265-9532; http://www.preparing-faculty.org ($2.25).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Planning; *College Faculty; College Instruction; *Cooperative Programs; Educational Attitudes; *Faculty Development; *Graduate Students; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; Partnerships in Education; Program Descriptions

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program and its effects on the graduate students that have participated in it, and has some suggestions for graduate students wishing to create a PFF program at their own schools. The PFF program was initiated in 1994 to bring together clusters of colleges and universities to plan programs that introduce graduate students to faculty life in a variety of campus environments. It is designed to help graduate students prepare to become tomorrow's faculty, strengthen their preparation as teachers of undergraduates, and create new paths in doctoral education. Examples of national institutional PFF activities are discussed, along with the results of a survey of past PFF graduate student participants. The most significant benefits reported by participants included improved pedagogical approaches, understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses, broader understanding of faculty life, opportunities to interact with mentors, and career planning guidance. Suggestions for graduate students wishing to participate in or initiate a PFF program at their own school are included, along with contact information for the PFF national office. (MDM)

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ED 422 764

A MEMO TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

PREPARING TO BE THE FACULTY OF THE FUTURE

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Number 5, October 1997

Think you want to be a college or university professor?

Ever wonder what faculty members "really" do?

How can you prepare to compete in the academic job market?

What is the college workplace really like?

Learning about the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program can answer these and other questions about faculty careers. PFF was designed to help graduate students in doctoral institutions develop the necessary skills to compete more effectively in the current and emerging academic job market.

NEW REALITIES NEED NEW APPROACHES TO GRADUATE PREPARATION

Faculty roles and responsibilities are changing. So must graduate preparation. Among the many challenges transforming the academy:

- New faculty are expected to demonstrate excellence in teaching, to set clear goals for student learning, and to use assessments to measure learning outcomes. Moreover, diverse students, purposes, and settings make special demands on today's faculty.
- Newer active, experiential, technological, and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning are now readily available and faculty members are expected to stay current.
- More and more, faculty are expected to be good campus and community citizens from the moment they arrive on campus. Faculty participation in shared institutional governance demands an increasingly complex set of skills. They include designing curricula, setting goals and strategic planning, student recruitment, fund raising, budget and personnel management, public relations and conducting program reviews.

TRANSFORMING GRADUATE PREPARATION

The graduate school culture and the cultures of various hiring institutions are often woefully mismatched. Nearly 80% of graduates with doctoral degrees come from 102 research universities and are socialized by these institutions. Yet, those who go on to faculty careers will find positions, for the most part, in the remaining 3,200 institutions in the United States. These institutions have very different cultures and missions, typically they place high priority on faculty who are effective teachers and nurturers of undergraduate students.

Furthermore, traditional graduate education in almost all fields is specialized while work with undergraduate students often requires a professional with broader, connected, and cross-disciplinary knowledge. New faculty members are increasingly expected to work collaboratively with colleagues for program coherence and effectiveness. Yet, graduate student research, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, is primarily a solitary activity, and few graduate students have substantive interaction with their counterparts in other departments.

This new range of faculty responsibilities receives scant attention in traditional doctoral programs. Graduate programs rarely consider the complexity and rich context of the environments in which future faculty will be working. A serious study of the life of a professor – what professors actually do— is largely absent from the graduate curriculum.

Preparing Future Faculty was developed to respond to these new realities and to reinvigorate the professoriate. The program is based on the principle that graduate education can and should prepare graduate students for the broad and complex realities of the scholarly life. PFF transcends the traditional ideal of developing only research expertise and affirms the ideal faculty member as a composite teacher, researcher, and academic citizen. Further, PFF transforms the way aspiring faculty are prepared for their careers, moving towards a professional education that is informed by the variety of institutions that make up U.S. higher education.

Since the 19th century, graduate education in the United States has grown in size and stature. Today it is, in many respects, the envy of the world. Since its beginning, graduate education has embraced research and developed a research degree, the Doctor of Philosophy. Doctoral education has come to be the province of research universities. And at research universities, in

particular, original faculty research often has the highest priority. Obtaining grants and being published in scholarly publications are highly valued activities, and academic stars are actively recruited to the faculty ranks. While a graduate preparation that focuses solely on research may have once been necessary, today it is insufficient preparation for students seeking faculty careers in most colleges and universities.

WHAT IS PFF?

Preparing Future Faculty is a set of ideas brought to life through a national program that is built on a spirit of cooperation and partnership. Its goal is to yield both a more inclusive and comprehensive graduate preparation for developing the future professoriate.

THE PFF IDEAS

A set of related ideas form the intellectual basis of PFF. Most fundamentally, PFF believes that the graduate experience should include:

- increasingly independent and varied teaching responsibilities;
- opportunities for students to grow and develop as researchers; and
- learning that enables students to contribute service to ones department and institution.

PFF further believes that ample support and guidance must be available to support each of these complex activities, and each activity should be informed in a context that considers the diversity of colleges and universities, the various faculty roles and responsibilities, and the diversity of faculty careers. Each PFF experience should also be:

- appropriate to the student's stage of development and progress toward the degree;
- direct and personal at a variety of institutions;
- guided by a formal system of mentors who hold varied roles at different institutions;
- open to include opportunities to learn new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning (e.g. instructional technologies and active, collaborative, and experiential approaches);
- addressing issues presented by increasing student diversity;
- integrated into the academic program and its sequence of degree requirements; and
- building on high quality teaching assistant orientation and development programs.

Independently none of the ideas framing PFF is new or radical. Yet placed together they add up to an innovative kind of graduate experience for those students aspiring to become faculty.

THE NATIONAL PFF PROGRAM

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) jointly direct PFF with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Together they have heightened the national visibility of PFF's success and the critical need to transform graduate education to prepare the next generation of professors. Since 1993, PFF has brought together colleges and universities as partners working in clusters with research universities to develop and implement programs for preparing graduate students for the professoriate. Graduate students, faculty members, and administrators at these clusters work collaboratively to identify qualities needed in new faculty and to design opportunities for graduate students to experience faculty life in diverse institutions. The idea is to bring "consumers," mainly undergraduate colleges, and producers, "doctoral degree granting institutions, together so that they might design and implement programs suited to the needs of students and hiring institutions.

Although PFF ideas have informed the national program, each cluster is free to develop programs tailored to its own particular needs and circumstances. No generic "program" has emerged. The resulting variety of models speaks to the flexibility and strength of PFF: It is a national program that has flourished from its own diversity and flexibility in allowing clusters to learn from each other.

EXAMPLES OF PFF ACTIVITIES

Each PFF cluster of institutions has developed its own specific activities. The activities are located in individual departments, across the university and on partner campuses. Some require relatively short time commitments, such as attending a series of

"In [illegible] me to take my statistics class, all of my classes, to the library and drop off food for flood victims and to incorporate these community ideas into the class. Some examples we used were statistically comparing things like the amount of flooding experienced to other flooded areas in order to broaden the horizons of the classroom. PFF taught me that classroom experiences don't have to be stuck in books and video clips."

- A doctoral student in Psychology at the University of Minnesota is referring to the flooding in the upper-Midwest during the summer of 1996

"I would not have attended departmental meetings if it were not for PFF. I learned the politics of the department from this service activity."

- A doctoral student in Mathematics at Howard University.

"As I look back on the past two years in PFF, I realize that I have seriously considered my future for the first time – PFF has forced me to think about my life, my graduate career, and my future goals in a new light."

-A doctoral student in Zoology at Arizona State University.

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"There ... my mentor did that sort of inspired me. One was going to a local conference of our national association. As a graduate student, I simply had not made it a high priority. It really helped quite a bit to go to one of these conferences with someone who had gone before and knew people and had a connection to that experience. That was an important part of the mentoring experience that I realized I would like to pass on to my students."

A doctoral student in Archeological Studies and Religion at the University of Minnesota

"My mentor took me to these meetings of women who were either coming up for tenure or who had just gotten tenure. It was really useful to hear. It was really reassuring. It was nice to know that there's a support network. It was a chance to go up and talk to these women who were deans."

A doctoral student in Geography at the University of Minnesota.

seminars in the course of the academic year. Others are extensive and require enrollment in courses, weekend activities, and routine travel to another campus. For example, some of the activities created by departments include:

- organizing forums for faculty members to describe and analyze their professional lives;
- inviting doctoral alumni to discuss how their careers do or do not connect with what they did in their graduate program;
- offering courses on teaching specific disciplines;
- offering seminars on professional issues;
- revising doctoral program guidelines to provide PFF experiences for students planning academic careers;
- creating forums to discuss faculty histories, career paths, and alternative professional lifestyles; and
- supporting graduate students who attend professional meetings and make presentations with faculty.

Activities offered by universities include:

- offering a seminar on general issues in college teaching;
- organizing a seminar on professional and career issues taught by faculty and administrators from different institutions and held on different campuses;
- discussing teaching in a multicultural setting;
- teaching about diversity;
- offering certificate programs in PFF or teaching and noting accomplishments on student's transcripts;
- explaining academic governance systems and inviting graduate students to attend faculty meetings or committee meetings;
- providing formal progression of TA's with titles and more pay to reflect expanded responsibilities or professional growth;
- helping students develop portfolios documenting expertise in teaching, research, and service; and
- training faculty how-to mentor students in areas beyond research.

Cluster institutions are engaging graduate students by:

- discussing their distinctive missions and different academic cultures;
- assigning students to a teaching mentor;
- inviting students to teach a unit or entire course and to get feedback;
- inviting students to attend faculty, committee, or departmental meetings and to later discuss their interpretations;
- inviting students to shadow a professor or academic administrator and discuss the activities observed;
- arranging opportunities for students to discuss the graduate school experience with undergraduate students; and
- inviting students to participate in faculty development activities.

SURVEY SAYS ...

PFF sounds interesting, but does it work? Are the benefits worth the effort?

Program supporters know that all but three of 357 graduate students responding to PFF surveys said they would recommend the program to their peers seeking faculty positions, two-thirds of them without reservation. What did the participating students learn? The most significant benefits reported include:

- improved pedagogical approaches;
- understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher;
- broader understanding of faculty life,
- opportunities to interact with mentors; other graduate students, faculty in own discipline as well as other areas; and
- career planning guidance.

Most respondents to the national surveys indicated participation in PFF programs did not lengthen their time to degree. Virtually all reported being encouraged by department chairs and major advisors. Finally, those students who had pursued faculty positions reported that PFF participation helped them prepare their application materials and seemed to have positively impressed institutions conducting faculty searches.

The National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) has provided an external, independent assessment of the merits of PFF. At their annual meeting of November 1996, NAGPS encouraged its members to create and support PFF programs on their campuses. NAGPS, in its resolution, also called on graduate students in all disciplines to take responsibility for their professional development as teachers and future faculty members.

It is important to note that while graduate students often provide the initial drive to make PFF happen, it can't happen without faculty support and investment. And given all the pressures on faculty these days, PFF is

competing for an especially valuable resource – faculty time. Again, surveys suggest that faculty are eager to become involved with PFF. Faculty members at partner campuses are enthusiastic about giving students an opportunity to experience the distinctiveness of their campus and educational programs. Graduate faculty members view it as their responsibility to encourage the professional development of students and to help those seeking faculty positions. Faculty also reported that PFF helped them to learn more about their own teaching, enjoy collegial conversations about faculty life and their love of teaching, and feel they were doing something worthwhile in mentoring graduate students.

CREATING PFF ON YOUR CAMPUS

The positive results of PFF invites the question, what about those of us not on PFF campuses? What do we do? How can my graduate student colleagues and I get involved?

There are a variety of approaches graduate students can take to connecting with PFF.

1) Find out if your campus has a PFF program or similar programs. There may be individual departments or colleges participating in a PFF program on your campus. Do some research. Contact the administrative unit that helps faculty improve their teaching. These units are often called: The Center for Instructional Development, the Program for Instructional Excellence, or the Center for Teaching Excellence. Often staff at these units are familiar with programs throughout the institution and can help you get connected to them. The graduate school and/or graduate student organization might also know about PFF-like programs.

2) Create your own PFF program. Developing PFF activities in your department or on your campus is not difficult. Graduate students are often the best change agents. As with the national PFF program, specify your needs and seek to address and focus your efforts accordingly.

- Develop a sound strategy along with a small group of like minded graduate students.
- Discuss your ideas with a few supportive faculty members whose support you can enlist. Meet with the graduate dean or an associate dean to discuss your ideas and to enlist his or her support.
- Do your homework. Learn about PFF programs on other campuses and within your discipline.
- Contact your disciplinary association to determine if the association has a special interest group that focuses on teaching, graduate education, and faculty development concerns. These groups are often involved in PFF-like activities and can provide you with resources and materials to support your effort.
- Contact the graduate student organization for the campus or within your program area.
- Talk to organization leaders about why you think PFF activities would support the work on your campus.
- Contact the teaching development unit, graduate studies program chair, and graduate dean at your school. Share with them the information you have gathered and tell them why your school should offer PFF-like activities for its graduate students. Take along some of the other student supporters who share your interest in PFF.

3) Resources Available to Help Create PFF Programs. The PFF national office can provide detailed information to help support your case. Available are:

- Lists of institutions participating in the national PFF program;
- Lists of disciplinary associations interested in PFF programs;
- Publications about PFF activities, including research on outcomes and impact;and
- Answers to frequently asked questions about PFF, and a "How To" manual.

The national office also provides a Consulting Service available to assist with specific purposes identified by clients. The PFF program provides an honorarium for the consultant and the client institution provides expenses for the consultant's travel, room, and board expenses.

The national office also supports a web page (**www.preparing-faculty.org**) that offers a wealth of information about PFF – including links to PFF programs at participating institutions and at institutions with PFF-like programs. The Council of Graduate Schools (**www.cgsnet.org**) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (**www.aacu-edu.org**) also have web sites with relevant information.

"Probably the most exciting project I have been involved in is the internship I have set up with the Theatre Department at Mesa Community College. I will be building sets, working lights and sound, and working as a director's assistant over the next two years. This experience is not only fun, but also essential if I hope to get a position in a Theatre Department. It has also made me rethink my career goals in terms of the community college setting."

A doctoral student in English at Arizona State University

"I came to understand how important – and how small – faculty committees can be. I didn't realize until I got there (a partner campus) that they were deciding the actual curriculum for everyone... It was pretty neat topic – a computer requirement for the students, regardless of discipline."

A doctoral student in Physics at the University of Minnesota

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Preparing Future Faculty is a joint project of the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Council of Graduate Schools. It is funded by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts.

AAC&U

The Association of American Colleges and Universities is the national voice for liberal learning. Its membership includes public and private colleges and universities. Through national initiatives, networking, conferences, and publications, AAC&U advances and strengthens liberal education and promotes its integration with professional programs.

CGS

The Council of Graduate Schools is an organization of institutions of higher education in North America engaged in graduate education, research, scholarship, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. Its membership includes 410 universities, granting 97 percent of doctoral degrees awarded in the United States.

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